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DE RUEHJM #0894 1360923
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 160923Z MAY 07
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7557
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

UNCLAS JERUSALEM 000894

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR WILLIAMS/WATERS/BELGRADE;
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGERFO; TREASURY FOR NUGENT/ADKINS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ECON](#) [EFIS](#) [EAID](#) [IS](#) [KWBG](#)
SUBJECT: GAZA FISHERMEN REPORT RECORD SARDINE CATCH

REF: JERUSALEM 716

1. (SBU) Gaza fishermen have caught record numbers of sardines over the last two weeks, bringing down Gaza's market price for sardines from 25 NIS to 13 NIS per kilo. Gaza-based Assistant Project Director of USAID's Palestinian Agribusiness Partnership Activity (PAPA) project Sa'lem al-Rais told Econoff May 15 that this year's sardine schools have been swimming north from Egypt within four nautical miles (n.m.) of the coast, making them catchable for Gaza fishermen who have been limited by Israeli navy vessels from operating more than six n.m. from the coast. Gaza-based OCHA representative Stuart Shepherd confirmed to Econoff May 15 that sardine fishermen in Gaza are experiencing record catches. The season runs from early April to mid-June. Shepherd did not know why the sardines have been swimming closer to the shoreline, but stated that this year's sardines are larger than those caught in recent years. Sardines normally swim between eight to 10 n.m. from the shoreline, and their shift toward the shore has resulted in the best sardine season in Gaza in 20 years, said al-Rais.

2. (SBU) Al-Rais reported that, since May 1, Gaza's 45 largest fishing vessels have caught on average 1500 kilos of sardines each day; while the 70 smaller fishing boats have caught on average 800 kilos each day. The best sardines caught this year have been 12 centimeters long, while the best in 2006 were just 10 centimeters long, said al-Rais. The PAPA program is assisting Gaza fisherman by providing them with capital assets such as nets. Numerous fishermen have requested larger nets, according to al-Rais, as those being used have allegedly been insufficient to lift current sardine loads. Shepherd stated that the fishermen would have even greater success if allowed to fish up to ten n.m. from the coast, as many of the largest sardine schools are believed to be swimming between six and ten n.m. from the Gaza coast.
WALLES